

## Message Text

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ACTION VO-03

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1287

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, CVIS, US, QA

SUBJ: A-2 VISAS FOR ARABIAN PENINSULA STUDENTS: QATAR

REF: DOHA 0013

1. GOQ HAS AGAIN BRACED US ON QUESTION OF A-2 VISAS. AT SOCIAL FUNCTION ON EVENING FEB 26, ABDUL AZIZ BIN TURKI, ASSISTANCE DIRECTOR, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, WHO HAS JUST RETURNED FROM TRIP TO US (REFTEL), ASKED AMBASSADOR WHETHER THERE HAD BEEN ANY PROGRESS ON EQUALIZING VISA TREATMENT OF ARABIAN PENINSULA STUDENTS.

2. TURKI SAID THAT HIS MID-JANUARY DISCUSSIONS IN DEPT ON SUBJECT HAD INDICATED THAT WE WERE CLOSE TO SOLUTION OF PROBLEM BY MEANS OF ISSUING "J" CATEGORY VISAS TO ALL STUDENTS FROM REGION. (COMMENT: WE HAVE NOT AS YET RECEIVED REPORT WE REQUESTED FROM DEPT ON TURKI'S CONVERSATIONS THERE. PLEASE ADVISE.) TURKI SAID "J" VISA, OR ANY OTHER SOLUTION THAT WOULD TREAT QATARIS EQUALLY WITH SAUDIS AND KUWAITIS, WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE, SINCE IT WAS THIS "DISCRIMINATION" THAT WAS IRRITANT TO GOQ.

3. TURKI SAID THAT SUBSEQUENT TO HIS WASHINGTON TALKS ON SUBJECT HE HAD VISITED SEVERAL UNIVERSITIES TO CONSULT WITH OFFICIALS AND STUDENTS ON PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY QATARIS STUDYING IN US. ACCORDING TURKI, THERE HAD BEEN FLOOD OF BITTER COMPLAINTS

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FROM QATARI STUDENTS RE ALLEGED DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THEM ON

VISA CATEGORY PROBLEM. TURKI SAID STUDENTS NOT ONLY UPSET BY WHAT THEY SAW AS DISCRIMINATION AS COMPARED WITH SAUDIS AND KUWAITIS, BUT THEY ALSO VERY APPREHENSIVE THAT CHANGED VISA CATEGORY WOULD SUBJECT THEM TO HARASSMENT BY INS.

4. WE EXPLAINED TO TURKI THAT IT APPEARED TO US THAT SATISFACTORY SOLUTION ON THE TRACKS AND WE ASKED FOR A LITTLE PATIENCE. TURKI SAID THAT GOQ'S PATIENCE REACHING ITS END SINCE IT HAD MADE REPEATED REPRESENTATIONS OVER PAST YEAR AND NOW IT WANTED SOME ACTION. HE SAID THAT PROBLEM HAD BECOME SO ACUTE THAT MINISTRY OF EDUCATION WAS CONSIDERING BRINGING IT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE AMIR, WHO WOULD THEN DETERMINE WHAT NEXT STEPS FROM QATARI SIDE SHOULD BE.

5. COMMENT AND ACTION REQUESTED: IT WOULD BE MOST EMBARRASSING IF THIS MATTER ESCALATED TO AMIR LEVEL, SINCE HE WOULD SIMPLY BE TOLD THAT WE ARE DISCRIMINATING AGAINST QATARI STUDENTS. ON THE FACE OF IT, SO IT WILL APPEAR AS LONG AS SAUDIS AND KUWAITIS CONTINUE TO RECEIVE A-2S WHILE QATARIS DO NOT. OUR BEST BET IS TO IMPLEMENT THE INDICATED SOLUTION OF GIVING "J" VISAS TO ALL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. I'M SURE THAT IF WE COULD TELL GOQ THAT ALL PENINSULA STUDENTS WILL BE ISSUED THE SAME TYPE OF VISA AS OF A CERTAIN DATE IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE, THAT THIS WILL SOLVE THE PROBLEM AND PREVENT ITS ESCALATING TO THE CHIEF OF STATE LEVEL WITH THE DAMAGE TO OUR RELATIONS WHICH THAT COULD IMPLY. I WOULD APPRECIATE AS PROMPT ACTION AS POSSIBLE ON THIS MATTER, AND IN MEANTIME I REQUEST THAT I BE ADVISED ON PRESENT STATUS.

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